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Book Reviews

Paths to Power: Central Church Sermons. By FRANK W. GUNSAULUS, D. D. New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1905. Pp. 362. \$1.25.

The Eye for Spiritual Things, and Other Sermons. By HENRY MELVILLE GWATKIN, M.A., D. D., Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906. Pp. 261. \$1.50 net.

The Evangel of the New Theology. By T. RHONDDA WILLIAMS. London: W. Daniel; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905. Pp. 266. \$1.50 net.

The Church and the Times: Sermons. By REV. ROBERT FRANCIS COYLE, D. D. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1905. Pp. 307. \$1.50.

Paths to Power has the indefinable charm of its eloquent author. The magnificent sweep of language, the color of imagination, and the burning passion which yearns over men, divining their struggles and voicing their aspirations, cannot be described or retold. Biblical characters and incidents stand out with marvelous freshness. There are profound intuitions into revelation, history, and the moral experiences of men, all enforced by a wealth of literary reference. The style has a sustained movement throughout, with here and there incisive utterances which fall like blows from a trip-hammer.

Yet the strength of the book is its weakness. It is too wordy, imaginative, and passionate. Thought is not sufficiently clear and comprehensive to serve as a basis for enduring emotional power. After reading one of these stirring sermons the mind strives in vain to grasp and retain the definite truth imparted. This weakness is fundamental, and is far from being relieved by the fact that the average sermon is some 7,500 words in length. Then the method of interpreting the Bible, under the spell of rhetorical power, comes very near being allegory. The book is inspirational rather than informing, and its power might have been vastly increased by gripping the intellect more vigorously even at some sacrifice of rhetoric.

The "central thought" of *The Eye for Spiritual Things and Other Sermons* is stated as follows: "The knowledge of God is not to be earned by sacrificing reason to feeling, or feeling to reason, by ascetic observance or by orthodox belief;" but is freely given to all who "purify themselves."

Further, the personal influence of Christ (faith) is the source of all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, "though the doers be those who never heard his name."

These sermons read like university chapel talks, as indeed some of them are. They are brief, practical discourses on various religious truths by a modern man. The author belongs to the liberal branch of the Church of England and speaks in no uncertain way of "the suicides who go over to Rome." The treatment is clear and suggestive, showing a mind acquainted with historical theology and at home in the modern world. Some quotations will illustrate both spirit and style: "You will not see God in earth or heaven till you have seen him in your own heart however sound and orthodox your parrot-cries may be" (p. 6). "Is it because there is not a God in England that we inquire so timidly at Rome?" (p. 24). . . . "God has never asked to be believed without regard to reason, and obeyed without regard to conscience" (p. 54). "We are simply unbelieving when we cling like drowning men to truth of other days which cannot be God's message to ourselves" (p. 51). "So far as it goes, the scientific spirit is the Christian spirit" (p. 92).

Fresh as are these views and pungent their expression, the book has some lame exegesis and muddy thinking. John is made to teach (p. 65) that Jesus would come suddenly, but not soon (*ταχύ*, Rev. 22:20 and elsewhere in Rev.). It is even more surprising to read that faith in a physical resurrection is based on the fact that the body shares in God's covenant through circumcision and baptism (p. 212). A further reference to baptism (p. 248) shows a mind not fully emancipated from ritualism; while the distinction between morality and religion (p. 221) is superficial.

The author of *The Evangel of the New Theology*, as indicated in a brief autobiographical reference, reached a distressing crisis in his spiritual experience, due to dissatisfaction with traditional views; and after prolonged struggle he came into a "sense of emancipation," of absolute "honesty," and of assured "faith in the eternal goodness of God" (p. 112). A master of English, he combines also philosophical insight, historical perspective, and acquaintance with the results of biblical criticism. The sermons of this volume are written from the modern point of view, as regards the nature and authority of the Bible, emphasis on spiritual reality as distinguished from theoretical and dogmatic formulations, the social side of ethics and religion, and the mission of organized Christianity. In one way or another the whole realm of modern religious thought is touched upon with profound discrimination. The book will prove exceed-

ingly helpful to all who desire a clear and sane statement on vital matters from the modern point of view.

A single quotation must suffice:

Christian discipleship, what is it? Entering with Jesus into the consciousness of the Divine Fatherhood; sharing with Jesus the assurance of divine help; working with Jesus for the uplifting of man; taking sides with Jesus against selfishness and impurity; losing the life of personal aggrandizement and selfish personal advantage, in the larger life of world-service, and so finding salvation in love (p. 93).

As a group of sermons, however, it would seem that the book gives undue emphasis to intellect and does not sufficiently appeal to the deeper things of the heart. Also, the use of Scripture is not large.

The Church and the Times is disappointing. This collection of miscellaneous and ordinary sermons hardly justifies the choice of the title. In its own words, the book is a plea for "a heaven-born, thoroughgoing, unremitting evangelism"; but with few exceptions—for example, a stirring call to foreign missions—the treatment does not grip or inspire. There are striking errors, however, and such as are being made on every hand today, from which readers may profit by way of warning. For example, on p. 188 we read: "Men may laugh at the Eden story and make merry over the biblical explanation of sin; but until they can furnish a better one their sneers only reveal their shallowness." This smacks of playing to the galleries and leaves a very narrow margin between caricature and untruthfulness. Again as regards the remark (p. 192), "I am old-fashioned enough to believe," it should be evident to all that such an accentuation of personal fashion has nothing to do with the gospel. Or, the statement (p. 271), "There are people who call sin by soft names missing the mark, and other such euphemisms," can be pardoned only on the ground of ignorance as to the original meaning of *ἀμαρτάνω*. For exaggeration and ambiguity the following statement (p. 229) is hard to beat: "This whole story of Eden is as true as the principles of geometry, if we pierce the shell of it and get to that which lies beneath." Such unthinking words as these might pass without notice, did one not feel that they are partly responsible for the distress and confusion of our times, and that their only effect must be to strengthen prejudice and to perplex humble seekers after the truth.

In reading these four books, fairly representative of the religious thought of our time, one is deeply impressed with a sense of their unity. In all are found an emphasis on spiritual experience rather than on dogma; the view held more or less consciously that salvation is for and through

personality; dissatisfaction with traditional views of the atonement, or, at least, an earnest desire for more light at this point; and a groping to find the true relation between personal faith and historical fact. Such unity between men widely separated by place and ecclesiastical affiliation is one of the most hopeful signs of our time. Likewise, one is impressed with the necessary qualifications of him who would speak to the deepest life of men today. He must be able to appropriate the wealth of spiritual truth found in the Scriptures and make it available for modern men; and to do this he should have an organic conception of revelation as found in the Bible, he should have the gift of historic imagination, and an acquaintance with the principles and methods of higher criticism, sufficient to appropriate its assured results. He must also have sufficient training in historical theology to be able wisely to deliver himself and others from the fetters of traditionalism. And, crown of all, he must have such a deep spiritual experience as shall become a consuming passion.

E. A. HANLEY

CLEVELAND, O.

Ecclesiastes in the Metre of Omar; with an Introductory Essay on Ecclesiastes and the Rubaiyat. By WILLIAM BYRON FORBUSH. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1906. Pp. 105. \$1.25.

The comparison of Ecclesiastes to Omar Khayyam began to suggest itself almost immediately after Fitzgerald's translation of the Persian poet was given to the world. In an expository way that comparison has been drawn in some detail by various writers, and has proven interesting. The present author now carries the process a step farther, and undertakes to present the thought, or rather some of the moods, of Ecclesiastes in the actual medium of Omar and Fitzgerald. He, as it were, decants the one vintage into the other, and then invites us to exercise our connoisseurship on the flavor of the Hebrew-Persian mixture. To those looking for detailed light on the interpretation of Ecclesiastes, the book, considered as in the category of biblical helps, will be disappointing. It is adapted rather to those of sufficient literary training to read a book by its feeling and atmosphere, as one listens to music. It is the product of the double task of translating prose into poetry, and of emphasizing the similarity of such poetry to that of another author. The result is not simply Ecclesiastes in meter; for Ecclesiastes does not demand expression in meter at all until its essentially prosaic character and aura are exchanged for that of poetry. So radical a change amounts to substitution rather than translation; one looks in vain for one's familiar Bible in the strange imagery of bagpipes,